

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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R 271347Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9903

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

USMISSION USUN NY

UNCLAS BEIRUT 10265

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: ELF SPOKESMAN CALLS ON ETHIOPIAN MILITARY TO JOIN IN
PEACE TALKS

SUMMARY: ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (ELF) SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED
FRONT'S WILLINGNESS TO HOLD PEACE TALKS WITH ETHIOPIAN MILITARY
LEADERS IN NEUTRAL COUNTRY IF LATTER PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE ELF
AS SOLE LEGITIMATE REP OF ERITREAN PEOPLE. HE ALSO CALLED
ON UN TO SEND IMMEDIATE FACT-FINDING MISSION TO ERITREA AS
STEP TOWARD SELF-DETERMINATION BY POPULAR REFERENDUM. END
SUMMARY.

1. AT AUG. 26 PRESS CONFERENCE AT BEIRUT, MOHAMMAD SAID IDRIS OF
ELF DECLARED FRONT WILLING TO NEGOTIATE PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH
RULING ETHIOPIAN ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE IN ANY MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE
NEUTRAL COUNTRY. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, SAID INDICATED HIS
STATEMENT WAS OFFICIAL ELF REPLY TO RECENT ETHIOPIAN MILITARY
FEELERS RE NEGOTIATIONS. HE POSED SINGLE FRONT CONDITION FORTALKS--
PRIOR ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF ELF AS "SOLE LEGITIMATE
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REP OF ERITREAN PEOPLE."

2. HE ALSO CALLED ON UN TO DESPATCH FACT-FINDING COMMISSION TO ERITREA AS STEP TOWARD EVENTUAL SELF-DETERMINATION BY POPULAR REFERENDUM WHICH, HE PROPOSED, BE UNDER SUPERVISION OF UN, OAU AND ARAB LEAGUE.

3. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, SAID REPORTEDLY REJECTED IDEA OF ERITREAN AUTONOMY WITHIN OR FEDERATION WITH ETHIOPIA, BUT HE ADDED THAT ELF PREPARED TO CONCLUDE POST-INDEPENDENCE ALLIANCE WITH ETHIOPIA AND TO NEGOTIATE ETHIOPIAN CORRIDOR ACROSS ERITREA TO RED SEA.

4. WARNING THAT ALTERNATIVE TO SETTLEMENT TALKS WOULD BE RENEWED ELF MILITARY OPERATIONS, HE CRITICIZED "ETHIOPIAN IMPERIALISM AND EXPANSIONIST POLICY" OF PAST AND MADE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CURRENT ETHIOPIAN MILITARY LEADERS AND PREVIOUS CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. HE SAID ELF HAD NO CONFIDENCE IN HAILE SELASSIE (WHO "MANEUVERING TO TRY TO RECOVER CONTROL OF COUNTRY") BUT DID NOT INSIST UPON EMPEROR'S REMOVAL AS PRE-CONDITION TO TALKS EVEN THOUGH THAT WOULD "PROVIDE BETTER CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS." GODLEY

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